

APHIS' Animal Care Report

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

This edition of the report highlights acts of excellence by our field personnel and provides an important reminder to research facilities about the reporting requirements under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). It also details several important initiatives that are underway to improve the effectiveness of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Animal Care (AC) program.

As always, the report aims to promote two-way communication between our program and representatives of key industry and interest groups like you. We want to know if you find the report helpful, and we welcome your comments. Call (301) 734-5175 to share your ideas.

W. Ron DeHaven
Acting Deputy Administrator

AC Inspectors Go Above and Beyond the Call of Duty

AC inspectors routinely do exceptional work that goes unnoticed by program stakeholders. The vignettes below describe three of these exceptional efforts. Future editions of this report will continue to highlight acts of excellence by field personnel.

- Earlier this year, a small aquarium in Maine went bankrupt and was taken over by the Small Business Administration (SBA), placing in jeopardy two elderly harbor seals that were long-time residents at the facility. In response, AC inspector Dr. Ron Zaidlicz visited the facility several times to check on the seals and assure that they were receiving the special treatment they needed.

Dr. Zaidlicz also worked with the owners, caretakers, and auctioneer hired to sell the animals to assure that the seals would not be auctioned off as property, and he cooperated with the Department of Commerce's National Marine Mammal Fisheries Service, which oversees the transfer of such animals. If SBA decides to place the seals in another facility, Dr. Zaidlicz has done the groundwork to assure that they will be placed together in a safe location.

- In August, the heatwave that plagued the Midwestern United States worried southern Illinois inspector Ben Flerlage. He was aware that one of his licensees, who owned a cougar and several bobcats, was hiding from the law and was not providing his animals with proper care. He became even more concerned when he spoke to family members and found that the man was not around during the day to provide water to his cats.

Working with State wildlife officials, Flerlage provided water to the cougar and bobcats in the middle of a 100-degree day. In a followup visit the next day, Flerlage and the State officials persuaded the owner to relocate the animals to another licensee's facility. Flerlage has since assisted in the relocation of the animals.

- This summer, a licensee in Colorado abandoned his facility, placing the health of his exotic cats in jeopardy. In response, several AC field personnel worked with officials from Alamosa County, the Pueblo Zoo, and The Humane Society of the United States to remove about 30 large felines from the facility.

To expedite the removal of the felines under Alamosa County's authority, veterinary medical officer Denise Sofranko made several inspections of the facility—some coordinated with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, a local veterinarian, and the Alamosa County Sheriff. All of the felines are now housed at USDA-licensed facilities in good standing.

Important Reminder for Research Facilities

Under AWA reporting requirements, research facilities have to submit annual reports on the number of AWA-regulated animals used in research. These animals must be listed by species and established pain categories. The deadline for submitting this year's report to APHIS-AC is December 1, 1997.

To assist you in preparing these reports, we discuss below five common reporting errors and ways to prevent them. Knowing these pitfalls will help you fill out your report accurately and help us process them efficiently.

- When adding the rows across for the total number of animals in column F, add only columns C, D, and E. Do not add the animals listed in column B. These animals were not used in research and should not be included in the total.
- A specific explanation of the procedures that produced pain or distress must be attached for all animals reported in column E. However, do not include any proprietary business information in the explanation.
- The continuation sheet is not necessary unless you are reporting more species than will fit on the 7023 form. If you do not use the sheet, you may discard it.
- If you prepare separate report forms for different sites, keep all the forms together and submit a cover form with the totals for all animals used under your registration number.
- Type or print the name and title of the institutional official in the correct block. We need this information to accurately identify the person in our records.

AC Launches Safe Pet Travel Campaign

In September, AC launched a public affairs campaign to educate members of the general public about traveling safely with their pets. To support the campaign, AC is disseminating three different informational pieces: a new, full-color brochure that gives an overview of both the AC and airline requirements for transporting animals on commercial airplanes, a factsheet that contains similar information, and a sticker labeled "Live Animals" to place on kennels to meet the AWA requirements. If you would like copies of these materials, contact Jamie Ambrosi at jambrosi@aphis.usda.gov or (301) 734-5175.

AC is also promoting its 24-hour, automated telephone voice response service (VRS), which provides information on the humane handling of cats and dogs during transport. By dialing (800) 545-USDA on a Touch-Tone™ telephone, you can learn about the AWA requirements for temperature, shipping documents, food and water, and cage sizes and make your animal's travel experience safer and more comfortable. Designed to be user-friendly, VRS is recommended for inclusion in training courses for airline cargo handlers, ticket agents, and supervisors. For brochures about the service, contact the Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health, Veterinary Services, APHIS, USDA, 55 South Howes, Suite 300, Fort Collins, CO 80521.

USDA-APHIS-Animal Care

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Strategic-Direction Update

AC's strategic-direction efforts are advancing on several fronts.

- AC's horse protection team finalized the strategic direction for the horse protection program in August, and we are currently preparing a document detailing the team's recommendations. In general, the strategic direction gives the horse industry greater responsibility for preventing sore horses from competing. No publication date has yet been set for the document. However, we anticipate that it will be released early enough to use for the 1998 horse show season, and we will issue a Federal Register notice announcing its availability. It will also be posted on our website.

- The risk-based inspection system recently completed its 3-month pilot project, which began in June 1997. Results from the pilot study will help determine the final design of the system. The risk-based system will enable AC to concentrate its inspection efforts where they are needed most.
- AC's internal training team is planning a national work conference for all AC inspectors for March 2–6, 1998. This will be the second national conference (the first took place in May 1996). The agenda for the conference is being drafted at this time and will be available later this year.
- AC's eastern region is the first to try the program's upgraded narrative inspection report. The remaining regions are scheduled to convert to the new form by the end of calendar 1997. The new, narrative inspection report is designed to be easier for licensees and registrants to read and understand. It is the first component in AC's new management information system.

Customer Service Goals Established

As part of its ongoing effort to improve service, AC used the results from its customer satisfaction survey administered earlier this year to establish baseline levels of performance and goals for the program. The survey used a 5-point scale (1 = poor, 5 = excellent). AC is seeking to improve its rating on

informational materials and electronic access from 3.24 to 4.0, its rating on the effectiveness of its regulations from 3.58 to 4.0, and its overall customer satisfaction rating from 3.59 to 4.0. The program is aiming to reach these levels of performance by fiscal year 1999. It will survey the same licensees and registrants at that time to measure its progress.

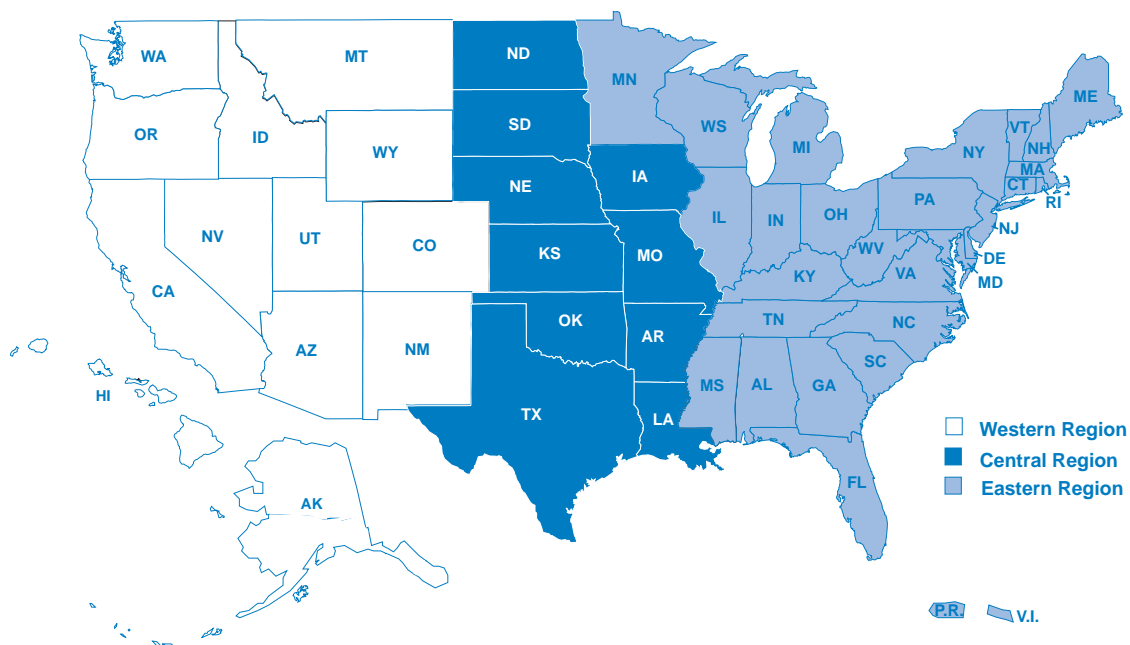
Final Rule on Tethering Published

On August 13, AC published a final rule that removed the provisions allowing the permanent tethering of dogs as a means of providing a primary enclosure. Despite some initial confusion regarding its scope, the rule pertains only to AWA licensees. Moreover, the temporary tethering of dogs for health or other reasons is permitted if licensees obtain approval from their AC regional inspector. The rule went into effect September 12. Copies are available from the AC headquarters office.

Review of Doris Day Animal League Petition Continues

AC officials are still reviewing the estimated 36,000 comments received on the petition prior to the close of the public comment period on May 27. They are also surveying their field inspectors to assess the petition's potential impact on the program's workload and alternative scenarios under which animal breeders and dealers could be regulated. Based on these efforts, AC will determine how to proceed.

Animal Care



Input Sought on Training and Handling Dangerous Animals

On July 24, AC published a Federal Register notice requesting information on current industry practices for the training and handling of wild and exotic animals that are potentially dangerous. Among other things, the notice seeks input on suggested experience requirements for animal handlers and trainers, as well as on contingency plans for the recapture of escaped or uncontrollable animals. The extended comment period on the notice closes November 6, 1997. AC will use the information received during the comment period to aid in developing future guidelines or rules on this issue.

Regulatory News

The items listed below are either under consideration and not yet published in the Federal Register, published in the Federal Register and open for comment, or previously open for comment and now under review by the Department.

Notices

- Doris Day Animal League Petition (under review)
- Notice of Intent to Regulate Pocket Pets (under consideration)
- Handling and Training of Potentially Dangerous Wild and Exotic Animals Used for Exhibition (open for comment)

Proposed Rules

- Perimeter Fencing (under review)
- Standards for Animal Auctions (under consideration)
- Exotic Canids and Felids: Minimum Age for Transport (under consideration)
- Standards for Farm Animals (under consideration)
- Standards for Marine Mammals (under consideration)
- Importation of Euthanized Animals (under consideration)
- Humane Treatment of Dogs and Cats: Licensing and Consignment (under consideration)
- Require Responsible Adult During Inspections (under consideration)
- Veterinary Medical Records (under consideration)

Final Rules

- Humane Treatment of Dogs and Cats: Wire Flooring (under consideration)
- Humane Treatment of Dogs and Cats: Temperature (under consideration)
- Swim-With-the-Dolphins Human Interactive Programs (under consideration)